

Stress Coping Strategies among Guidance Counsellors in the Performance of Their Jobs in Secondary Schools Delta North Senatorial District

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ABSTRACT

The study was set out to investigate stress coping strategies among Guidance Counsellors in the performance of their jobs. One research question and four hypotheses were formulated to guide the study. Two instruments were used to collect data for the study. One hundred and ten copies of the instruments were administered on one hundred and ten Guidance Counsellors or respondents. One hundred and four copies of the questionnaire were retrieved showing about 95 percent return rate. The percentage and Z test statistics were used to analyse the data. Some of the findings showed that there is no significant difference between Guidance Counsellors in big and small secondary schools in their choice of relaxation as stress coping strategy. There is no significant difference between Guidance Counsellors in urban and rural secondary schools in their choice of music as stress coping strategy. There is no significant difference between male and female Guidance Counsellors in their choice of regular physical exercise as stress coping strategy.

KEYWORDS: Stress, Coping, Job, Strategies.

INTRODUCTION

Stress has almost become an inevitable thing among Nigerian workers including Guidance Counsellors probably because of the harsh economic situation which the Country is at present going through. Fuel scarcity has become a common occurrence in Nigeria and the situation has been further made difficult as a result of rising cost of essential commodities like gari, yam, oil, rice, and tomatoes. Therefore, members of the public including Guidance Counsellors are daily stressed – up.

In support of this Ajudeonu (2009:1) asserted that:

The Nigerian society may provide a fertile ground under which stressors such as irregular electricity and water supply, bad roads, inflation and armed banditry exist.

Stress has been described by Akinade (2007:3) as any stimulus that either raises your excitement or anxiety level beyond what you regard as above your usual or personal capacities. It is more so, if it is prolonged. As far as Lazarus (1991) is concerned, stress is a very broad class of problems which tax the system. Mullins (1991) identified major stressors related to career development to include lack of job security, career mismatch, over or under promotion which often lead to disappointment and frustration.

Ling (1991) carried out an investigation of occupation stress among Hong Kong Aided secondary school teachers and one of his findings revealed that the teaching profession in Hong Kong is highly stressful and this in turn negatively affected their teaching effectiveness.

In Nigeria Peretomode (2002:110) carried out an investigation of job related stress and work performance among academic administrators in Tertiary institutions in Delta State and found out that there was no significant difference in the work performance of the administrators when their years of teaching experience and stress levels were considered. There was no significant difference in the work performance of academic administrators with regard to their institution and stress levels.

STRESS COPING STRATEGIES

The literature has revealed that there are various strategies for coping with stress and among them are:

RELAXATION

Akinade (2007:85) maintained that relaxation is antonym of stress. A relaxed person is less apt to be stressed. Create time to sleep, but do not oversleep. Sleep is the best form of relaxation and is good for our health. When you lose sleep for a prolonged time the body may or will break down.

MUSIC

Music is the art of making pleasing combinations of sound in rhythm and harmony. Tubesing and Tubesing (1990) opined that good music keeps the mind away from worries and thus reduces to the barest minimum the degree of stress in individuals.

REGULAR PHYSICAL EXERCISE

Willis (1991) has stressed that regular physical exercise such as walking, jogging, swimming, playing tennis and cycling can be very useful in handling both existing stressful conditions and potential ones. Such exercise will help to burn excess adrenalin glands in the human body which increases the body's heart rate and when one is excited, afraid or angry) and in the long-run stimulate the production of natural morphine – like chemicals in the body which will induce a feeling of well-being and relieve nervous fatigue.

COGNITIVE THERAPY

Gangster and Schaubroeck (1991) have asserted that the cognitive therapy technique have been successful over the years in handling job stress related problems by emphasizing the positive and free-will aspects of the individual. The need for the employees in an organization to adopt a positive attitude toward one another is quite essential as it helps to create a conducive working environment.

SCHOOL GUIDANCE SERVICE

Egbule (2002:63) has stated that the entire guidance programme is service oriented and consisted of individual educational, vocational and personal social problems. He stressed that the problems could further be divided into:

1. Educational Service
2. Vocational service
3. Appraisal service
4. Information service
5. Planning and placement service
6. Follow-up service
7. Referral service
8. Personal-social service
9. Research service
10. Community service

It is a common knowledge that the Guidance Counsellor in addition to the ten services that have just been enumerated has his/her full teaching work-load of about twenty periods a week. A part from that he/she participates in other school activities like conduction of morning and afternoon devotion, invigilation of examination and compilation of examination results. All of them put together may be regarded as sources of stress to the Guidance Counsellors.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

Big Secondary Schools

It refers to secondary schools whose population is between 500 to 1000 students.

Small Secondary Schools

These are secondary schools that have student population of between 0 – 499.

Urban Secondary Schools

This is made up of secondary schools that are located in the state capital, local government headquarters and other towns where there are modern amenities like pipe borne water, electricity, hospital and post office.

Rural Secondary Schools

These are secondary schools located in villages where there are no modern amenities like pipe borne water, electricity and post office.

Experience Guidance Counsellors

This refers to Guidance Counsellors who have been in the service of the Post Primary Education Board for more than ten years and above.

Less Experience Guidance Counsellors

These are Guidance Counsellors whose services in the Post Primary Education Board is between 0-9 years.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The literature appears to reveal that the Nigerian environment in which the Guidance Counsellor work is characterized with some stressors such as the galloping inflation, insecurity of lives and properties as a result of armed robbers activities, irregular electricity and water supply. Probably other stressors are the numerous guidance services and teaching work-load which the Guidance Counsellor must do in order to earn his/her salaries and allowances. The problem in this study therefore is what are those aspects of the Guidance Counsellors job that stress him/her? If he/she is stressed, what are some of coping strategies available to him/her? In order to solve this problem the researcher therefore formulated one research question and four hypotheses to guide the study.

RESEARCH QUESTION

What are the sources of stress to the Guidance Counsellor in the performance of his/her job?

HYPOTHESES

1. There is no significant difference between Guidance Counsellors in big and small secondary schools in their choice of relaxation as stress coping strategy.
2. There is no significant difference between Guidance Counsellors in Urban and Rural secondary schools in their choice of music as stress coping strategy.
3. There is no significant difference between male and female Guidance Counsellors in their choice of Regular physical exercise as stress coping strategy.
4. There is no significant difference between experienced and less-experienced Guidance Counsellors in their choice of cognitive therapy as stress coping strategy.

RESEARCH PROCEDURE AND METHODOLOGY

This study has adopted Ex post facto design using descriptive survey method. Asika (2000:24) asserted that ex post facto research is a systematic empirical study in which the researcher does not in any way manipulate or control independent variable because the situation for the study already exists or has already taken place. However, Best (1983) maintained that descriptive research is concerned with conditions that exist, practices that prevail, beliefs, points of view or attributes that are held.

Two instruments were used for the collection of data for this study. One of the instruments is sources of stress among Guidance Counsellors in the performance of their job questionnaire (SOSAGCPOJOQ). It had ten items and respondents were expected to indicate either "yes" or "no" whether he/she is stressed by each of the items. This instrument had a reliability coefficient of 0.84. The second instrument known as stress coping strategies questionnaire (SCSQ) had twelve items based on the four stress coping strategies and had a reliability coefficient of 0.82. Both instruments were validated and found to have language and content appropriateness.

One hundred and ten copies of the questionnaire were administered on one hundred and ten Guidance Counsellors or respondents spread across one hundred and thirty six Secondary Schools in Delta North Senatorial District. One hundred and four of the questionnaire were retrieved showing about 95 percent return rate. The researcher used percentage and Z test statistics to analyse the data and results were held significant at 0.05 level of significance.

PRESENTATION OF RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of this study are presented on five tables as follows:

Research Question One

What are the sources of stress to the Guidance Counsellor in the performance of his/her job?

Table One

Sources of stress to the Guidance Counsellor in the Performance of his/her job.

<u>S/N</u>		<u>YES</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>NO</u>	<u>%</u>
<u>1</u>	<u>Educational Service</u>	<u>86</u>	<u>(82.7)</u>	<u>18</u>	<u>(17.3)</u>
<u>2</u>	<u>Vocational Service</u>	<u>90</u>	<u>(86.5)</u>	<u>14</u>	<u>(13.5)</u>
<u>3</u>	<u>Appraisal Service</u>	<u>96</u>	<u>(92.3)</u>	<u>08</u>	<u>(7.7)</u>
<u>4</u>	<u>Information Service</u>	<u>58</u>	<u>(55.8)</u>	<u>46</u>	<u>(44.2)</u>
<u>5</u>	<u>Planning and Placement Service</u>	<u>92</u>	<u>(88.5)</u>	<u>12</u>	<u>(11.5)</u>
<u>6</u>	<u>Follow-up Service</u>	<u>86</u>	<u>(82.7)</u>	<u>18</u>	<u>(17.3)</u>
<u>7</u>	<u>Referral Service</u>	<u>82</u>	<u>(78.8)</u>	<u>22</u>	<u>(21.2)</u>
<u>8</u>	<u>Personal and Social Service</u>	<u>75</u>	<u>(72.1)</u>	<u>29</u>	<u>(27.9)</u>
<u>9</u>	<u>Research Service</u>	<u>19</u>	<u>(18.3)</u>	<u>85</u>	<u>(81.7)</u>
<u>10</u>	<u>Community Service</u>	<u>16</u>	<u>(15.4)</u>	<u>88</u>	<u>(84.6)</u>

The study revealed on table one that eight out of the ten school guidance services were sources of stress to the Guidance Counsellors. Two of the school guidance services were found to be less stressful. The most stressful is the appraisal with 96 or 92.3% "Yes" and 8 or 7.7% "No". The least stressful is the community service with 16 or 15.4% Yes and 88 or 84.6% "No".

Hypothesis One

There is no significant difference between Guidance Counsellors in big and small secondary schools in their choice of relaxation as stress coping strategy.

Table Two

Difference Between Guidance Counsellors in Big and Small Secondary Schools in their Choice of Relaxation as Stress Coping Strategy.

<u>RESPONDENTS</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>MEAN</u>	<u>S.D</u>	<u>Z</u> <u>CAL</u>	<u>Z</u> <u>CRIT</u>
<u>Guidance Counsellor in Big Secondary Schools</u>	<u>47</u>	<u>7.91</u>	<u>6.26</u>		
<u>Guidance Counsellors in Small Secondary Schools</u>	<u>57</u>	<u>8.47</u>	<u>5.52</u>	<u>-0.48</u>	<u>1.96</u>

Table two has revealed that there is no significant difference between Guidance Counsellors in big and small secondary schools in their choice of relaxation as stress coping strategy.

This is because the calculated z value of -0.48 is less than the critical z value of 1.96 at 0.05 level of significance. The null hypothesis which says that there is no significant difference between Guidance Counsellors in big and small secondary schools in their choice of relaxation as stress coping strategy is accepted.

Hypothesis Two

There is no significant difference between Guidance Counsellors in Urban and Rural Secondary Schools in their choice of music as stress coping strategy.

Table Three

Difference Between Guidance Counsellors in Urban and Rural Secondary Schools in their Choice of Music as Stress Coping Strategy.

<u>RESPONDENTS</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>MEAN</u>	<u>S.D</u>	<u>Z</u> <u>CAL</u>	<u>Z</u> <u>CRIT</u>
<u>Guidance Counsellor in Urban Secondary Schools</u>	<u>62</u>	<u>8.81</u>	<u>5.57</u>		
<u>Guidance Counsellors in Rural Secondary Schools</u>	<u>42</u>	<u>12.95</u>	<u>3.96</u>	<u>-4.16</u>	<u>1.96</u>

The null hypothesis which says that there is no significant difference between Guidance Counsellors in Urban and Rural Secondary Schools in their choice of music as stress coping strategy is upheld. This is because the calculated z value of -4.16 is less than the critical z value of 1.96 at 0.05 level of significance on table three.

Hypothesis Three

There is no significant difference between male and female Guidance Counsellors in their choice of regular physical exercises as stress coping strategy.

Table Four

Difference Between Male and Female Guidance Counsellors in their Choice of Regular Physical Exercises as Stress Coping Strategy.

<u>RESPONDENTS</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>MEAN</u>	<u>S.D</u>	<u>Z</u> <u>CAL</u>	<u>Z</u> <u>CRIT</u>
<u>Male Guidance Counsellors</u>	<u>51</u>	<u>9.17</u>	<u>5.62</u>		
<u>Female Guidance Counsellors</u>	<u>53</u>	<u>8.95</u>	<u>5.62</u>	<u>-0.18</u>	<u>1.96</u>

On table four, the study found out that there is no significant difference between male and female Guidance Counsellors in their choice of regular physical exercises as stress coping strategy.

This is because the calculated z value of - 0.18 is less than the critical z value of 1.96 at 0.05 level of significance. The null hypothesis which says that there is no significant difference between male and female Guidance Counsellors in their choice of regular physical exercises as stress coping strategy is hereby accepted.

Hypothesis Four

There is no significant difference between experienced and less experienced Guidance Counsellors in their choice of cognitive therapy as stress coping strategy.

Table Five

Difference Between Experienced and Less Experienced Guidance Counsellors in their Choice of Cognitive Therapy as Stress Coping Strategy.

<u>RESPONDENTS</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>MEAN</u>	<u>S.D</u>	<u>Z</u> <u>CAL</u>	<u>Z</u> <u>CRIT</u>
<u>Experienced Guidance Counsellor</u>	<u>52</u>	<u>8.81</u>	<u>5.51</u>		
<u>Less Experienced Guidance Counsellors</u>	<u>52</u>	<u>12.23</u>	<u>3.63</u>	<u>-3.74</u>	<u>1.96</u>

The investigation on table five has revealed that there is no significant difference between experienced and less experienced Guidance Counsellors in their choice of cognitive therapy as stress coping strategy. This is because the calculated z value of -3.74 is less than the critical z value of 1.96 at 0.05 level of significance. The null hypothesis which says that there is no significant difference between experienced and less experienced Guidance Counsellors in their choice of cognitive therapy as stress coping strategy is accepted.

DISCUSSION

One of the findings of this study is that there is no significant difference between Guidance Counsellors in big and small secondary schools in their choice of relaxation a stress coping strategy. This finding agrees with Akinade (2007) who pointed out that relaxation is antonym of stress. He maintained that a relaxed person is less apt to be stressed.

Another finding of this investigation is that there is no significant difference between Guidance Counsellors in Urban and Rural Secondary Schools in their choice of music as stress coping strategy. This finding lends credence to Tubesing and Tubesing (1990) who asserted that music keeps the mind away from worries and therefore reduces to the barest minimum the degree of stress in individuals.

The study further revealed that there is no significant difference between male and female Guidance Counsellors in their choice of regular physical exercises as stress coping strategy. This finding Corroborates

Willis (1991) who maintained that regular physical exercises such as walking, jogging and cycling can be very useful in handling both existing stressful conditions and potential ones.

Finally, the study found out that there is no significant difference between experienced and less experienced Guidance Counsellors in their choice of cognitive therapy as stress coping strategy. This finding agrees with Gangster and Schaubroeck (1991) when they asserted that cognitive therapy have been successful over the years in handling stress problems by emphasizing the positive and free will aspects of the individual.

CONCLUSION

The conclusion that may be drawn as a result of the findings is that the Guidance Counsellors job is characterized with stress but various coping strategies have been found useful.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are proposed as a result of the findings and conclusions.

- (1) Guidance Counsellors should find time for relaxation after each days work.
- (2) Guidance Counsellors should use music as stress coping strategy.
- (3) The use of regular physical exercises and cognitive therapy are encouraged as stress coping strategies among Guidance Counsellors.

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